

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1039

LIMDIS

EO 11652: XGDS4

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MILI, US, CI

SUBJECT: A GENERAL LOOKS AT GOC AND RELATIONS WITH US

REF: A) SANTIAGO 756 B) SANTIAGO 0061 C) DAO IR 6 817 0027 76

1. SUMMARY: A VERY ABLE CHILEAN AIR FORCE (FACH) GENERAL CLOSE TO FACH CINC/JUNTA MEMBER GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH ON FEB 5 GAVE EMBOFF FULL RUNDOWN ON HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD GOC AND USG. OFFICER IS WELL KNOWN TO MISSION OFFICERS, AND FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE CONSISTENT WITH PRIOR STATEMENTS OF HIS. HE IS LOYAL CRITIC OF GOC; BELIEVES SEP 1973 COUP WAS FULLY JUSTIFIED AND THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN SHORT-TO-MID TERM, BUT ALSO BELIEVES CHILEAN PUBLIC WILL NOT STAND FOR DICTATORSHIP INDEFINITELY. HE FORESEES DIFFICULT YEAR IN US-CHILEAN RELATIONS, DOUBTS ANYTHING GOC DID WOULD RESULT IN QUICK RESPONSE FROM US, BUT BELIEVES ARMY LEADERSHIP MAY BE BEGINNING TO SEE REAL NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. FACH GENERAL SAID HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE BEHIND LEIGH IN CRITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD GOC AND PRESIDENT PINOCHET. THEY ARE COMPLETELY LOYAL, SHARE BASIC AIMS, AND WOULD DO NOTHING TO BREAK ARMED FORCES UNITY, BUT APPLY PRESSURE AS THEY CAN FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN INTERNAL PRACTICES.

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3. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE IN SHORT-TO-MID TERM TO MILITARY GOVERNMENT, BUT GOC MUST IMPROVE PERFORMANCE TO SURVIVE. CHILE CANNOT LIVE IN WORLD ISOLATION, NOR WILL CHILEAN PEOPLE ALLOW DICTATORSHIP TO REMAIN INDEFINITELY. DESPITE PRESSURE ON GOC NOW, OFFICER FORESEES NO BASIC CHANGE SOON, CERTAINLY NOT THIS YEAR. ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL LIKELY WORSEN BUT WILL NOT RESULT IN RIOTS OR SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATIONS: CHILEANS KNOW TOO WELL TOUGHNESS OF ARMED FORCES TO TAKE A CHANCE.

4. OFFICER THOUGHT GOC RELATIONS WITH US WOULD CONTINUE TO WORSEN AND WOULD NOT IMPROVE IMMEDIATELY EVEN WITH POSITIVE CHANGES HERE. HE HOPED DEPARTMENT WAS GETTING OBJECTIVE PICTURE OF LOCA SITUATION, AND COUNSELED USG TO APPLY PRESSURE ON GOC SELECTIVELY, INTELLIGENTLY, AND WITH MUCH CARE. OFFICER FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO SUGGEST PRESSURE POINTS BUT NOTED NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF RIGHT-WING CIVILIAN ADVISERS TO GOVERNMENT (JAIME GUZMAN AND ALVARO PUGA SPECIFICALLY -- "NATIONAL SOCIALIST"). HE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AGAINST CUTTING OFF ECONOMIC AID, OR ASSOCIATING US WITH ECONOMIC BLOCKADE, WHICH WOULD ONLY STIFFEN MILITARY RESISTANCE AND MAKE LIFE FOR ALL CHILEANS WORSE.

5. HOW TO RESOLVE INTERNAL CHILEAN PROBLEM? OFFICER SAID FACH AND NAVY ARE TOGETHER IN FAVOR OF MORE FLEXIBILITY AND MORE ATTENTION TO BALANCING FF INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICES. THE ARMY IS THE PROBLEM: IT IS SOLIDLY BEHIND PINOCHET, WHO IS INTELLIGENT AND MUST EVENTUALLY COME TO UNDERSTAND CHILE'S PROBLEM.

6. CHILE NO LONGER FACES SERIOUS INTERNAL THREAT. THE ONLY TERRORIST FORCE OF ANY POTENTIAL, MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR), IS OUT OF BUSINESS. GOC COULD ABOLISH CURFEW, MOST DETENTIONS, AND EVEN RAISE STATE OF SIEGE WITHOUT RUNNING TOO HHEATUY RISK. OFFICER THOUGHT NEW DECREE INTENDED TO PROTECT DETAINEES (REF A) WAS SINCERE EFFORT AT IMPROVEMENT BUT WAS ESSENTIALLY WINDOW DRESSING. ABUSES OF DETAINEES COULD BE STOPPED ANY TIME IT WAS DESIRED TO DO SO BY ABOLISH DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (DINA).

7. ASKED ABOUT SUPPOSED LETTER FROM TEN GENERALS TO PINOCHET
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THAT SURFACED IN EARLY JAN (REF B), OFFICER SAID HE WAS POSITIVE NO SUCH LETTER EXISTED. HE SPECULATED THAT ARMY GENERAL ARELLANO HAD CONCERTED WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC) TO PUT PINOCHET ON THE SPOT. LAST OCTOBER -- SOON AFTER INCIDENT BETWEEN PINOCHET AND ARELLANO INVOLVING LATTER'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT AMBASSADORSHIP TO SPAIN-- AN OLD PDC MUTUAL FRIEND HAD INVITED OFFICER AND ARELLANO FOR EVENING. HE REPORTED THAT ARELLANO HAD BEEN SO OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL OF

PINOCHET THAT HE (THE FACH GENERAL) HAD WITHDRAWN FROM THE CONVERSATION. (EMBOFF IN NOVEMBER HAD RECEIVED A LESS FLAVORED ACCOUNT OF THIS CONVERSATION FROM THE PDC HOST.) OFFICER IMPLIED THAT ARELLANO/PDC HAD AGREED ON ANTI-PINOCHET MOVE, AND THAT STORY OF TEN GENERALS WAS SURFACED SOON AFTER EX-PRESIDENT FREI HAD DISTRIBUTED HIS ATTACK. (COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM THIS.)

8. OFFICER WENT ON THAT JUNTA'S MILITARY CEREMONY OF JAN 27 WAS NOT AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO FREI AND THE STORY OF THE LETTER. HE AND OTHER FACH GENERALS WENT TO IT UNWILLINGLY, AND DECISION TO MOUNT IT SHOWED LACK OF CONFIDENCE THAT CEREMONY WAS INTENDED TO DISPEL.

9. OFFICER HAS CLOSE CONTACTS WITH PDC AND VISITED FREI REGULARLY UNTIL LAST AUGUST. HE SEES PDC AS POWER HUNGRY AND DEMAGOGIC, HOWEVER, AND INCAPABLE OF GOVERNING SHOULD MILITARY TURN POWER OVER TO THEM. HE HAD IMPRESSION EMBASSY WAS TOO CLOSE TO PDC AND SAW IT AS THE HOPE FOR CHILE. EMBOFF COMMENTED IN THIS RESPECT THAT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE CONGENIAL PERSONALLY, AND EMBASSY IS IN TOUCH WITH THEM, AS IT IS WITH OTHER POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT FORCES IN CHILE, BUT NOTHING MORE. PDLMOSELF, #HOWEVER, APPARENTLY HAS NO PRETENSIONS TO TAKE OVER GOVERNMENT SOON, AND EMBOFF DOUBTED SUCH TAKEOVER WAS A NEAR TERM PROSPECT.

10. COMMENT: CONVERSATION REVEALED MANY CONTRADICTIONS AND IS IN PART SELF-SERVING. BUT IT IS USEFUL REVELATION OF THOUGHT PROCESS OF A BRILLIANT GENERAL WHO IS LOYAL TO HIS SERVICE AND JUNTA, WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH US, AND SEES NEED FOR MAJOR IMPROVEMENT IN GOC PERFORMANCE.

11. PERHAPS PRINCIPAL CONTRADICTION IS DESIRE TO ABOLISH
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DINA AS THE PRINCIPAL REPRESSIVE AGENCY, WHILE FACH ITSELF CONTINUES TO DETAIN AND MISTREAT PEOPLE (REF C).
POPPER

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED

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